

HALF CENTURY OPERA CAREER IS EASILY POSSIBLE

By WILLIS STEELL.

ALL conditions being favorable, gifted with a voice and intelligence—and intelligence is the greater gift—having trained both carefully and lived right always, you can sing acceptably in public for half a century. It has been done, indeed, it is being done.

What's more, the newcomer with the fresher voice and the added attraction of novelty cannot out you from your well deserved niche in the temple of song. It is foolish to fear him, for whatever gifts he brings at the opening of his career only time and constant study shall ripen until he grows to be a rival worthy of your throat.

A part of this dictum is obviously true and will have the success of the obvious. Everybody likes to say of what he has read, if he feels it, that he has thought along the same line with the man who writes. That is what makes the triumph of many an obvious book. It is certain that one-half of the persons who read what singers say about how they grow in their art with assiduous practice will exclaim:

"That's nothing new, for I've thought the same myself."

The other half of the statement often uttered by great singers who give figures that shall indicate their belief in the longevity of their career is not so generally convincing. To make it go down may require a cloud of witnesses.

Some Have Rounded Out

The Half Century Term

To sing in opera for fifty years! Impossible, the doubters will say, although they may know of an instance or two that have lagged as long on the stage. This is not being written of the superfluous ones, but of the opera singers, men and women, who have rounded out a half century of operatic glory.

Are they afraid of the young singers? Absurd. The old artist knows that it has taken him years to learn his art and that at any epoch of it by taking stock he knows too that he is still learning and still has much to learn. From peak to peak of his art he goes with ever increasing interest and pleasure, particularly if he carries his audience with him. But he flies not on superimposed wings, no adventitious or exterior aid can carry him to the heights, and his progress upward depends upon himself.

For a new opera he must learn so much and in so many ways. History, biography, philosophy, there is scarce a branch of human learning from which he may not draw, having the ambition and the will, to help him in its interpretation. For the very role in which perhaps he made his debut and that he must get up in again twenty years afterward he finds himself compelled to study with the thoroughness and care that he would devote to a new score.

In the familiar roles that the newcomer assumes as a common thing there is no more to be expected or hoped for than the traditions bound up in it. The singer just beginning to emit "his wood notes wild" has enough to do to learn and display these fittingly or at least acceptably. His brother "singer of an elder day," not content with tradition, provided he has any brain at all, seeks to perfect his mimetic art as he does his singing. In fact, if he is a true artist he lays more stress on the former.

The lamented Caruso of "La Juive" was as different as possible from the Caruso of the Duke in "Rigoletto," as he sang it at his first appearance in the Metropolitan Opera House. The voice, as it rolled out in the part of Elczer, where he touched the highest point in his art, was not the voice of the Duke. It had lost certain quality and had gained other quality. If it lacked the freshness of those bygone days, he was now its complete master and it obeyed him implicitly. In other words, in his later day he had gained a perfect control wanting in the earlier. While in style and finish the later impersonation was so much fuller and greater that the man at one time and the other could not be criticised as the same artist.

To say these things, of course, is merely to emphasize the obvious note previously touched on, but they cannot be omitted. With Caruso in mind, as he died at an age under 50, the latter half of the proposition cannot be carried on. There are physicians who say that when a man dies before his allotted time, given the conditions that he has lived a regular normal life, he really passes away through violence. And by a stretch of meaning to words this may be said of the great tenor.

Shining Examples Are These

Of Those Who Last Long

But there are living examples of both parts of the dictum. Battistini is a shining mark. At 68 this Italian, pronounced by many judges of singing to be the greatest barytone in the world, is singing three times weekly in the season at Berlin.

And De Luca, popular barytone of now many seasons at the Metropolitan, although a much younger man, has already behind him a longer career on the operatic stage than Caruso's own. He is recognized by voice connoisseurs as the best representative now singing of the beautiful old Italian school of *bel canto*, who by his continuous excellence is carrying the torch onward to the crowding new generation.

"Fifty years is not too long to give a singer," said this artist to the writer, "and I number many men who figured on the stage so long with continued renown. If I do not say so much for women it is because other causes than loss of voice or diminution in art come in to shorten their career. Women are more the playthings of an audience than men are and they are therefore more subject to the whim of an audience. This year an idol, next year for a reason that has nothing to do with her voice or her acting she may be treated with heartbreaking indifference.



Mme. Ernestine Schumann-Heink, popular for many years in opera, still is active in concert.

"It is so to a greater degree in Europe, that is, on the continent of Europe, than here or in England. In Anglo-Saxon countries there is a warm fidelity to which she can trust herself. Madame Patti experienced this charming, heart-warming trait of a people in England, and in this country Madame Sembrich, although she has retired, still holds a high place in the affections of music lovers."

Several artists have held for long a favorite place in the hearts of New York's operagoers; Lilli Lehmann and Madame Scialchi are two who sang after the fatal thirty years supposed to close an opera career had elapsed. Madame Schumann-Heink still leads one of the most active musical lives, although for several years now she has eschewed the opera.

Who Ever Will Forget

Versatile Little Bauermeister?

Who has forgotten, who was privileged to hear Marianna Brandt in the early days of German opera here, how great an artist she was, although she was what many people call an old woman when she sang here first? And "Little" Bauermeister, so called in affection, noted for her ability to sing any role and take acceptably almost any prima donna's place at a moment's notice, she was no longer young when she won her place here, and she kept it long after many others more notable at home had come and gone and been forgotten.

"I should put the singing term of a woman at 30 years and that of a man at 50," said Mr. De Luca. "In Italy I recall four sopranos who sang that long. All but one of these has retired. She is Signora Storchio, who after 30 years still sings and pleases. D'Arcle, Teodorini and Ferrani, after so long on the boards, have retired to dignified and happy private life. "While they were singing an innumerable chorus of songbirds started up in the various melodious trees of Milan, Naples and Rome and other Italian cities where voice is taught. From none of the new singers did these old favorites get any hurt. On the contrary, while Italian audiences gave due attention to the new songbirds just trying their notes, they did not diminish the admiration felt for these elder divas."

"In my own career I have sung with three tenors who reached the half century of public singing. They were Marini, who is dead; Anselmi and Garbin, who live, and the last named has been singing every season for fifty-five years."

"Is it not credible that the new tenor could take lessons in singing from these old fellows? Ah, yes, and in more than singing: in phrasing and pronunciation so that their hearers may understand them, in delicacy of treatment of certain roles that might be so incorrectly interpreted. There is much, much to be learned from these great men who have worn the laurel for so many years. Were it but to speak of their acting! Years have taught them the value of so many little points that the neophyte is naturally unconscious of. To see these men on the stage in their best interpretations was better than a year under the most celebrated coach."

Many of His Own Words

Are Applicable to De Luca

Many of the words used by De Luca about these famous singers, unknown here save by repute, could be very fittingly applied to himself, as no doubt they will be by the countless admirers of his finished art. He believes thoroughly in the complete education of the singer by the Italian method, which he said had never been overthrown by any other, no matter how novel and promising it was.

A good five years of study in this fashion is needed by every singer who prepares for opera, and this training includes two years of solfeggi study. Then comes the study of the operas themselves—at least ten of these should be made familiar before a debut—and finally a round of the little theatres to get acquainted with audiences, to feel a personal reaction.

"It is a hard apprenticeship, every day

De Luca of the Metropolitan Recalls Notable Examples of Long Service in Lyric Art and Says Experience of Years More Than Offsets Freshness of Voice—Mme. Sembrich, Mme. Schumann-Heink, Scotti and Patti Some Brilliant Examples

Giuseppe de Luca, famous barytone, now with the Metropolitan Opera Company, who has had a longer singing career than Caruso and who expects to sing for years to come.



Antonio Scotti in the role of Scarpia who, though 56, is singing and acting to-day with all the dash and power of youth.

must see honest and hard study, and following it comes a life from which many of the ordinary pleasures of life, innocuous as they are to the generality of men, must be omitted. The pleasure of congenial society can be tasted in but a moderate degree, the pleasures of the appetite must be curbed. And there is study, study, always study. "Right at the outset let me say, although the remark is a digression, the young man who aims at opera should marry early, first choosing wisely, if he can, the proper wife for him. This saves him from the foolish adoration which pursues even an inferior singer on the stage."

"When I sing again an old rôle of which I have not had recent repetitions I study it as if it were a new one. I trust not to memory, nor to what I have done in the past. It is like a new story and a new score, demanding as much as these would ask. Such pains do I feel, as if I must devote, even to an old opera like 'Rigoletto,' And for a rôle in Mozart's 'Così fan

Tutti' which I am now preparing, more time, more study, more pains are necessary. "And do I fear the rivalry of a new barytone when I have done all that is in me? No. If he can do more, it is because he has gifts beyond and greater than mine, gifts for which he is not responsible but came to him from nature."

"First comes the voice, that he must have. Without the voice nothing or very little may be done. Then comes the intelligence. Ah, pardon me, I feel like putting that thing intelligence first. The artist must know as well as feel. Otherwise he will not get very far. In fact, without the intelligence which gives him judgment he will not know when he sings flat, and he will not correct that fault. Nor will he know when his voice begins to fail."

"It need not fail, however, if it has been trained to work right and with the proper fundamentals. Then, I repeat, a man may sing divinely, even though he be old."

"Battistini, that grand singer I know



Mme. Marcella Sembrich, who gained a high place among music lovers by years of artistic work.

well. We studied under the same master. He was Persichini of Rome. Battistini was his first pupil and I was his last. By the admirable and natural method he gave us it is no surprise to me that his first pupil is still singing nobly, and as I take care of myself for my career I shall be surprised if I do not sing so long. But I first have to keep alive, you know!"

De Luca began singing at 13, and sang in public at 15. Then he set out to study seriously under the Roman maestro. At 20 he made his debut as *Valentine* in "Faust" at Piacenza, Italy. He has been singing every season since without intermission. Already his years on the stage approach that number to which men are immune, but which is fatal to prima donnas, his thirtieth year in opera.

"Come Again," Say Friends,

But De Luca Rests in Summer

"But," said he, "I rest myself in the summer. For eleven years I sang in Buenos Aires and every season I receive calls. 'Come again; come again,' entreat my friends. I say, 'No. Excuse me. When I am free from singing through the winter then I will come gladly, but in the summer I take my ease in Italy. There we sing very easily, just as we can, as all singers can, the beautiful soft words of the Italian. And for two or three benefit performances I am pleased to appear in Italy, but all the summer I study, exercise, grow strong in my repose."

In Mr. De Luca's view the young barytone singers coming up to snatch at the famous rôles will have to adopt a life very similar to his own, which seems to be

ruled by common sense. They must have what has been proved to be his by his long success here, a truly reliable art, and they must cultivate as he has done, or says he has done, an indifference to money.

"The opportunity to earn great fees the whole year through is, I confess, tempting, but I have resisted it. Why should I sacrifice more of my life, of my art, to money? What use will it be to me? I eat what is good for me and no more. I spend what needs to make me comfortable and what I feel should go in charity. If I amassed a great fortune whom would it serve? Perhaps there might be quarrelling in its distribution."

Exercise and Prudence

Are Singer's Reliance

"A prudent life is the one I commend to my rivals and successors, for whom I have the kindest feeling. For me, exercise has proved beneficial. Long walks in every kind of weather have kept me fit. I sleep with the windows open. I am afraid of no climatic violence, and training and custom have armed me against weather changes. These things I recommend to the new singers who are to follow and who may be on our heels, and I do so because they have served me well."

When he was asked what sort of exercise he took in addition to long walks, Mr. De Luca answered that they were mainly to preserve the power of breathing, which is so necessary to the singer. Certain calisthenics aid in this throughout the winter, while in summer he is devoted to swimming because it serves the same need.

Mephisto in Berlioz's "Damnation of Faust," is De Luca's favorite rôle, and he regrets that this beautiful opera fails to find a lasting place in the repertory of the Metropolitan. Other operas that he likes to appear in are (in the order of this list): "Rigoletto," "Barber of Seville," "Don Juan." The latter opera, it is his criticism, while containing much dramatic action, more in fact than any other of the scores of Mozart, still dramatically fails to clinch. But he likes to sing the Mozart music. He sang *Amfortas* in the first production of "Parsifal" in Rome, an event which occurred in January, 1913.

Never to Be Satisfied

Leads to Excellence

While Mr. De Luca confidently expects to be singing when his fiftieth operatic anniversary comes around, conditioned on his remaining alive till then, as he smilingly said himself, another singer whom he admires very much is nearer to that goal than he is himself.

This is Mr. Scotti, who is now in his 56th year. The barytone rather infrequently appears of late at the Metropolitan, where his friends, a legion of them, are always grateful for his fine art. But he, nevertheless, as one of the singers of his own opera company which tours the country after the close of the Metropolitan season, does a good deal of singing in the course of the year. Like his confrere, Scotti is never completely satisfied with his various interpretations, but is always seeking to improve their quality.

This trait, this inhibition of the feeling of satisfaction which both artists exhibit, is surely their best warrant of holding their forward places in the operatic rank, whoever may appear as new aspirants. Their fame is grounded on a rock and the winds and waves of popular voices, however they may shake, cannot destroy it.

But, why worry? One could tell the other night at a performance of "Traviata" what the *vox populi* was saying.

Mystery of Lost Lemuria

IT is the belief of many distinguished scientists that there was once a continent in the Indian Ocean which sunk beneath the waves and of which Madagascar, the Maldives and Laccadive islands, Ceylon and Sumatra are surviving fragments.

A name Lemuria has even been suggested for this lost continent. One of the strongest arguments for its existence is found in the extraordinary plant and animal life of Madagascar, curiously related to the animals and plants of India, Ceylon and the Malay Archipelago.

The great island of Madagascar is equal in area to Oregon and California taken together, equal to them also in north and south extension and possessing, like them, bands of mountain, forest and plain. Madagascar is only 250 miles from the east coast of Africa, yet it contains not one of the most characteristic and conspicuous African animals—neither elephants, rhinoceri, lions, leopards, hyenas, giraffes, zebras, antelopes, apes, monkeys nor baboons, though all of these abound in Africa and most of them are found on the mainland opposite the great island. Instead of these familiar African animals, which include some of the biggest and most conspicuous creatures on the globe, the forests of Madagascar contain only small and insignificant mammals, sixty-six species in all; and of these just one-half, or thirty-three species, belong to the family of lemurs, small animals that suggest an unequal blending of monkey and cat, which live in the thick tropical trees and are rarely seen because they hunt their prey at night, eating insects, fruit, birds' eggs and young birds.

The lemurs fill a lowly place in the scale of animal life and date from a very remote period of geological history. Lemurs more or less close cousins of those of Madagascar are found on the African mainland, in India, in Ceylon and in the Malay Archipelago. And it was their presence in these widely separated regions that suggested the existence of a former continent.

The remaining mammals of Madagascar consist of about a dozen species of insectivora, including a shrew, and five genera of a very peculiar animal, whose closest kin are found in far distant Haiti and Cuba, the *Centellidae* by name, which have no near relation anywhere in the world; eight civets, belonging to four peculiar genera, and four species of rats and mice, also of peculiar genera.

Then come two animals which fall into a different class—a small hippopotamus and a river hog, both semi-aquatic in their habits, which seem to have come over from Africa at a not very remote period, probably along the chain of the Komoro Islands. Of hundreds that may have started on this journey perhaps two or three pairs arrived in Madagascar after many generations had been born and died on the intervening islands. Among the reptiles of Madagascar there are two American genera of snakes and one belonging to a genus found in America and China; there are lizards belonging to two genera of the *Iguanidae*, a family which with this exception is exclusively American; there is a genus of the gecko family, which is found in Australia and America.

The first question to be solved is why none of the large and conspicuous creatures of Africa are found in Madagascar. At the very remote period (probably in the Eocene, the first division of the tertiary period of geology) when Madagascar was joined to the African continent none of these distinctive animals had yet arrived in Africa, or at least in that part of Africa which lies south of what is now the Sahara Desert. Africa north of the Sahara was joined by land to the south of Europe, and the Sahara was a sea; and it was in this land, stretching far from the Sahara, that the elephants, lions, rhinoceri and the other distinctive animals we have named were developed, ranging from France to the Himalayas.

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